

Northern Windows

Whitehorse

Started: Business started in 1985, window manufacturing in 1987.

Contact: Dave Borud

Northern manufacturers windows, doors and hermetically sealed glass units.

Getting started: Northern was started by two brothers who had been in the storm window business in Edmonton. After importing many windows in a short time period, they explored manufacturing opportunities and entered into a joint venture with the Yukon Indian Development Corporation. The first windows were produced in 1987. In 1990, Northern designed its own window profile based on experience of its first four years of business. It also opened up a plant in Anchorage.

Key to success: Developing a product that is maintenance free and is designed for northern climates has ensured a local and northern export market. Northern has chosen to concentrate its expertise and efforts on closure products for buildings. It diversified into doors and sealed units but dropped other building products that were part of Polar Industries. Being involved in the retail, manufacturing and installation aspects of the business has helped to ensure Northern employees know both the product and the clients and it has also eliminated the “middleman”.

Lessons learned: Financial institutions would not finance a local window business so YIDC was successfully approached for support. Competing with the low costs of southern window manufacturers has been a challenge but development of a more energy efficient window and the provision of local service has helped Northern compete.

Future of business: Northern was recently sold and is now wholly owned by Yukon First Nations. However, one of the owners has stayed on to manage the business. Continued expansion into the Alaska market, and possibly NWT, is in the works.

